

APPROVED 01/16/2008

Present: Pat Martel, Andy Kohlhofer, Charles Kimball, Chair, Public Keith Stanton who videotaped the meeting, Doug McElroy, Recording Secretary Kathy Arsenault, Peg Pinkham, and Donald Gates, Jr.

Charles Kimball, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:06 pm.

Discussion about the meeting with the Budget Committee and School District and confirmation of the Saturday, January 5, 2008 date took place. Pinkham stated that Principal Dawn Lewis would be able to attend the meeting scheduled for this Saturday.

Discussion regarding the past meetings minutes took place. Some review of the minutes was done. Questions and corrections regarding the December 12, 2007 meeting minutes began. The last meeting minutes that have been approved were from the December 5, 2007 meeting. Doug McElroy stated that the town meeting budgets were finished being presented. There were still a few questions waiting on Heidi to answer for the Committee.

Charles Kimball stated that it seems most departments have been putting in for a 3% raise, but he himself only got a 2.5%. McElroy stated that we should discuss increases further when we take a vote.

Kimball began discussion about the December 8, 2007 joint meeting minutes. There were neither questions nor corrections to me made. Motion to accept the minutes of December 8, 2007 was made by McElroy and seconded by Gates. Majority voted in the affirmative to accept the minutes of December 8, 2007.

McElroy began discussion about the December 12, 2007 meeting minutes. Pinkham stated that she had sent Jeanne e-mail regarding some grammatical corrections. Due to their length and corrections needing to be done, McElroy suggested tabling the minutes. A motion was made by Pinkham and seconded by Kohlhofer, to table the minutes until January 9, 2008. A majority voted in the affirmative to table the December 12 minutes until January 9, 2008.

Kimball began discussion of the December 19, 2007 meeting minutes. A motion was made by Kimball and seconded by Kohlhofer to table the December 19, 2007 minutes until January 9, 2008. Majority voted in the affirmative to table the December 19, 2007 minutes until January 9, 2008.

Martel asked about the wage matrix. Gates stated that the wage matrix is not back yet. McElroy asked about the Town Clerk wages line, and noted that we still do not have it finalized. At previous meetings it was discussed about warrant articles regarding elected officials salaries. He continued that technically the budget is all warrant articles that go before the voters and that the voters are the ones that vote in raises. Pinkham stated that there really is no RSA on this proposal of warrant articles, or at least it is a gray area, and how it is interpreted. Gates stated that yes it is how a person interprets it, whoever that person might be. Pinkham noted that if we change the history of the way we vote, more discussion of this is needed.

Kimball recalled a time when the Budget Committee put through increases for the Selectmen's salary. The Selectmen had not asked for it. The Budget Committee decided it was time for it. Kimball continued that it is our budget as a Committee that goes in front of the voters. McElroy stated that it is in fact two budgets, both the Selectmen and the Budget Committee's recommendations. Kimball said that usually they are close, there may be only one or two items we do not agree on, but the one that goes in front of the voters is our budget. He stated that if the voters at Town Meeting amend it, the amendment could only go 10% above the Budget Committee recommended total. McElroy added, or 10% below. Kohlhofer stated unless it is a bond issue.

Kimball stated that the Auto Pulse machine that was purchased last year had been used. Pinkham asked was it successful. Kimball stated no, they believe he was down too long before they got to him. He continued it was unfortunate that this time was unsuccessful.

Kimball asked if the Committee would like to start on some of the budgets. Pinkham asked if we should wait until we have full representation. Kimball stated that he would like to wait until we hear back from Heidi. Pinkham added that with Peter and Mike not being here, we are not giving them their opportunity to speak. Gates added that we should do that when they are here. He continued that Mike had questioned his (Gates) voting on the town budgets and taking him out of it. Kimball asked who his family member was. Gates replied his son-in law works for the Police Department. Kimball stated that he is not immediate family. Pinkham noted that Mike would have to step back when it would concern Jeanne. Gates said yes, concerning the Selectmen's budget. Kimball stated that our budget is not showing a big push to benefit someone in the family. He continued that it was brought up (at previous meetings he attends) that giving someone in the family a big pay raise puts you in trouble. Gates stated no, we do not have any of that. We have been able to solve the problems at the table. Kimball said yes, our town is right on the ball. The meetings he attends are advising us before doing something illegal, and they give a lot of good information. Gates said that is helpful because we are just lay people and volunteers. Kimball said yes, the information is brought down to a level to be sure everyone understands it.

Kimball asked if anyone had any items they want to discuss. Kohlhofer said that the 10% budget increases concerns him. He continued that this is his concern. McElroy asked is a lot of that the 3% COLA. Kohlhofer said yes. McElroy asked if the matrix increases could be a part of the 2008 budget. Gates stated I do not know if we could, and even if we were off by "x" numbers of dollars, it does not mean that we have to meet it. Kimball asked would you be putting in for that. Gates said I do not know, I have not even seen it, but I do not think so. Gates stated it is safe to assume the matrix is not going to go down. He continued that it may be too late to implement it and you would have to have time to study it.

Kimball stated that Guerwood's budget was doing great. Unfortunately the last month of snowfall wiped him right out. He was hoping to have enough left over to buy the new snowplow. Martel said yes, he wanted to buy the snowplow. Gates said yes, I believe that he already did buy it. Kimball stated we cannot gripe about his budget and what he does. You can try to compare it to other towns and see just how much he does for us. He continued all the accidents the other towns have; last Monday was the first accident we had with the weather, which was on Main Street. The road was blocked, but the driver was ok.

A brief discussion about police and fire/rescue response took place with reference to recent accidents and recent fires.

Kimball stated he would like to see the Committee consider knocking down the 3% COLA. Pinkham asked, for everyone? Kimball said yes, at least down to 2 or 2.5%. He added that he is thinking about the people on fixed incomes. McElroy asked does that mean you are going to be voting. Kimball said yes, if it comes to a tie. Kimball added that he just wanted to state that right off. McElroy replied you can say it, but that does not mean all of us are saying it. Kimball suggested we could all be thinking of it. Pinkham stated that we should be seeing them part way. Kimball said no, I do not want to go over 2.5%, and that would be his recommendation. Kimball added that he just got his raise and it was \$30 for the year. Pinkham said we should just check and see what private industry is doing. Kohlhofer said they need to have enough increase to live on, but it is what the town can afford to give. Kimball asked did you get a raise, Gates replied yes 2%, Pinkham replied no, Kohlhofer yes 4%, Martel said no, and not for years.

A brief discussion about co-payments and VA hospital bills vs. Medicare took place.

Kimball stated getting back to the budget, lets take a look at the COLA and look at the increase. He continued we need to come up with something other than the 3%. Pinkham stated that the 3% has been used

in the past. Gates added yes, it has been used a benchmark. Kimball stated that he had to take a pay cut even with a COLA. Kohlhofer added that the average increase in Social Security is based on wage increases, not inflation. Discussion about disability and Social Security took place.

Kohlhofer stated that there is a warrant article that still has to come before us. We still have not gotten the one for the Fire Rescue portable lighting. Kimball stated we are not going to get one. Gates added that the Selectmen were not planning to recommend it at this time. He continued that the Police Department detective car was also off the table. Martel asked, and the lighting? Gates replied yes, it is off the table as well.

Martel asked about Pest Control. Gates said yes for the mosquito testing. Martel continued that there is also SeaCare Health. McElroy stated yes \$2000 for SeaCare Health Services. Kohlhofer stated that there is a website that you can go on to find more information about prescription assistance. McElroy stated that there was something like this last year but it was voted down. Kimball believed that was Hospice. Pinkham said no, she believed it was for child advocacy. Pinkham added that they did not show up to speak regarding it. Gates said - and it did not go through. McElroy stated that if they do not present at town meeting, it is an uninformed item.

McElroy stated that Saturday we are starting at 9:00 am. Pinkham said yes, and hopefully we can get through all of it. Kimball stated that we just need to get all the information. McElroy added that we then take it home and digest it. Kimball said yes, and see where we can cut it, because we have to cut something. Kimball hopes to cut 200,000 out of it. Pinkham stated that the School Board has already cut it several hundred thousand dollars. She continued that if you can find it, we are open to new ideas. Kohlhofer stated that the concern is that we cut it, then we go to School District Meeting and it is voted back in. Gates stated that he could appreciate that frustration. The Budget Committee labors over this for weeks, and we go to School meeting and things get voted up. Kohlhofer stated that some can afford to pay for it and some cannot.

McElroy asked if next Wednesday are we doing town budgets or school. Kimball replied the town budgets. Pinkham stated that we should be able to get through the town in one night. Kimball yes, but we might decide on a figure of 2.5% and then those numbers will all have to be recalculated. Kohlhofer said yes, and added that Heidi needs to get back to us.

Kimball asked if there were any further questions. Public Keith Stanton said he had a question. Stanton questioned with regard to the School District Hearing and the Town Budget Hearing and the belief that discussions about either cannot take place during the other. Kimball said no; they have to be separate. He asked can the Town vote at Town Meeting to vote on the School District and does the Town own the School District. Pinkham said no the school is owned by the School District. Stanton questioned the plowing of snow by the Road Agent to plow out the school. Kimball stated there is money in the school budget for him. Stanton replied that he did not see any line item in the school budget for that. They can hire him to plow certainly. Pinkham stated that the consensus at the time was that it is all town money. She continued what you are talking about is expenditures. Stanton said I am talking about money at Town Meeting that is handed over to the School Board. Kimball said if we had to pay someone else to plow out the school it is going to cost more money. Pinkham stated that the question here is accountability as to what is being spent from the school. Stanton stated that he could keep track of his time for the amount being plowed, yet the school is getting it done for free. Stanton asked how we could vote on this at Town Meeting. McElroy stated that there should be a line item for that, for the School to pay back the Town. Gates stated that if the school budget goes up \$10,000, the town budget goes down \$10,000. Kimball stated that if we go into a co-op that would be dropped. Stanton said they could hire him as part of the co-op. Martel said that it could also go out to bid. Pinkham stated she would check on how SRHS does it. Kohlhofer stated someone could bring it up at Town Meeting. McElroy stated that Saturday is the time to bring that up, even if it is a line item of \$1.00.

Kimball said it all boils down to one thing, it all comes out of our pocket. He continued that it is something we could discuss, let it go this year and bring it up next year. Gates stated that we should discuss it here.

Pinkham stated that there was a letter from Annmarie Scribner, Tax Collector. Kathy Arsenault gave it to Charles Kimball prior to the meeting. Kimball passed the letter on to Andy Kohlhofer to read. The request from Scribner was for the letter to be read aloud. Kohlhofer took time to read the letter to himself. He then read the letter aloud and some discussion took place about the December 12, 2007 meeting. In the letter, Scribner stated she was concerned about the public accusations, questions about paying prior and present Deputy Tax Collectors and the attack on her integrity by Mike Nygren.

McElroy stated that Mike would need to speak to this more than anything. There seems to be a discrepancy with the payments for 2007 and the budget for 2008. Pinkham noted a word of caution to be careful as to what we say. She continued that on TV, they do not know the individual or the people being discussed. People think that because they are saying it, it must be true. Kohlhofer stated that statements like that should be ruled out of order. Kimball stated that anyone could speak to that, not just the Chairman. Pinkham said perhaps the question was not clear. There are underlying things there that need to be addressed. McElroy stated that this needs to be discussed with Mike here. Pinkham said it is a mistake of dates and times; and that he (Nygren) said he would apologize and she is sure he will.

Kohlhofer stated that this letter is now a part of the minutes. Pinkham replied yes it is. Kohlhofer turned the letter from Annmarie Scribner, Tax Collector over to recording secretary Kathy Arsenault, to be recorded as part of this meeting's minutes.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Kimball, seconded by McElroy. Majority voted in the affirmative to adjourn the meeting at 8:17 pm.

Respectfully submitted

Kathy Arsenault
Recording Secretary